

SERMON
The Resurrection of Our Lord
April 4, 2010

Acts 10:34-43
Psalm 118
1 Corinthians 15:19-26
Luke 24:1-12

Brothers and sisters in Christ, grace to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus, who is the Christ. Amen.

I would guess that many of you have heard the story – or at least some version of it – about the man who was walking down the street one night. Suddenly he comes across one of the neighborhood children crawling around on his hands and knees on the sidewalk beneath a streetlight.

The man asks the boy, “What’s wrong, Jimmy? Did you lose something?”

“Uh, uh, yes,” whimpers Jimmy. “My mom gave me a dollar to buy some ice cream and I dropped it and can’t find it.” Feeling sorry for the boy, the man also gets down on his hands and knees, and begins to help look for the dollar. After searching a while, the man asks, “Jimmy, are you sure this is where you lost it?”

“Oh no,” says the boy. “I dropped it way over there by that vacant lot.” “What?!” the man says. “If you dropped it way over there, why are you looking for it here?” Jimmy looks at him, then points; “It’s dark over there! I can see a lot better here.”

You see, little Jimmy was never going to find his dollar if he kept looking in the wrong place, no matter how long or hard he looked, or how sincerely he expected to find it there.

In today's story of the resurrection, some women went to the tomb of Jesus to anoint his body. But when they arrived, two men in dazzling clothes appeared to them and said, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen."

Like Jimmy, the women on Easter morning were never going to find Jesus if they kept looking in the wrong place. No matter how long or hard they looked or how sincerely they expected to find him, he was not there.

So many times in our lives, we too look in the wrong places. There was a popular country song some time ago called "Looking for love in all the wrong places." I think that this song speaks to many of us.

And it is not only love, but it is also happiness, power, and wealth. We keep searching and searching for these things when in fact, the risen Christ has already given them all to us. But so many times, we are blinded by the deceptions of our culture.

First of all, we look for *love* because we can't believe that we are already loved. We are told that in order to be loved, we must have an outgoing, charming personality, we must be young and intelligent. We must be physically attractive like those on the cover of fashion magazines. We forget that there is something called airbrushing.

We can't believe that we are loved just as we are – a precious, beautiful person created in the image of God.

So instead, we go out into the world searching for acceptance – searching for someone to love us. In doing so, we sometimes compromise our values and sell short our God given gifts. "If I just do this, or if I just change this about myself, then he or she will love me." But resurrection love is unconditional.

Resurrection love says, “Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Secondly, we look for *happiness* by accumulating material things. “If I only had this new car, then I would be happy. If we only had a bigger house, then we would be happy. If we could just go on that great vacation, that would make us happy.”

But resurrection happiness says, “Happy are those who are poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Happy are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Happy are the meek, for they will be filled. Happy are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Happy are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Happy are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Happy are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

You see, resurrection happiness is no longer determined by our possessions or our circumstances. But rather, it reflects something much deeper and more lasting. It is called joy. And that joy is now available within each and every one of us because of the fact that Jesus lives.

Thirdly, we look for *power* to make ourselves feel better than others. “If I only get that promotion, then I would be able to tell these people how this company really needs to be run.”

“If I would just get this advanced degree so as to have some abbreviations after my name, then people would respect me, and I would have the authority that I deserve.” “If I only had power, then when I would say something, people would listen.”

However, resurrection power is just the opposite as to how the world sees power. Resurrection power does not mean being first, but rather it means being last. For Jesus said; “The first shall be last, and the last shall be first.”

A few days ago on Maundy Thursday, we heard how the Master washed the feet of his followers. You see, resurrection power comes through love and service to others. One of the most powerful people in recent history was a poor, old, uneducated, lowly woman named Mother Teresa. When she spoke, people listened. For she had resurrection power.

Finally, we look for *wealth* so that we can purchase all of the above – or so we think. We are led to believe that money can buy happiness. We are led to believe that money can provide personal and financial security.

We are led to believe that money can make us powerful. And many are even led to believe that money can buy love, despite what the Beatles sang some 40 years ago.

But this is only if we follow a Jesus who is still in the tomb. Because if we follow a dead Christ, then we must depend on ourselves and our wealth for our own well being. We must accumulate as much money as we can to assure ourselves happiness, security, health, love and power.

We adhere to that famous phrase that is NOT in the Bible that says; “God helps those who help themselves.” Again, NOT in the Bible.

But resurrection wealth says that our treasure lies not in our bank account, but rather in the Kingdom account. For Jesus said; “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”

You see, even though we proclaim that Christ is no longer dead, sometimes we still continue to live like he is still in the tomb. However, when we live in the resurrection, our lives are transformed. Where there was once anger and hatred, there is now love and forgiveness. Where there was once violence and war, there is now peace.

Where there was once strife and division, there is now unity. Where there was once prejudice and injustice, there is now acceptance and justice. Where there was once greed and jealousy, there is now satisfaction and gratefulness. Where there was once death, there is now life.

When that is the case, entire families can see the working of the risen Jesus in their lives. They suddenly see that the burden of family can become a resurrection joy. Our jobs can go from being drudgery to being a vocation – a calling from God. They can be a way of service – a way of helping others around us to see the joy that is in Christ Jesus.

Looking at work in light of the resurrection, co-workers are not a pain in the neck, but fellow workers in God's kingdom. They are seen as human beings with similar needs and desires.

When we live in the resurrection, somehow money stretches further as we spend it on only things that we need, rather than on things that we want. For we trust that God will provide for our every need as he promised.

And because of the resurrection, we too can have hope that someday, we too will rise and join the saints who have gone before us. That is our reason for believing. That is our future when we place our trust in Jesus.

So why do we look for the living among the dead? Perhaps it is because we sometimes forget that we are indeed resurrection people.

Therefore, no longer do we need to look for love, happiness, power, and wealth from the earthly kingdom in which we reside. No longer do we need to look for the living among the dead. For he is risen. He is alive! Alleluia! Amen.

May the peace that passes all understanding be with you now and for life everlasting.
Amen.